

Best Practice Guide

Escape Routes



Have An Escape Plan

An escape route is a 'back-up' route that a driver can take in case of a dangerous situation on the road.

It is a PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED route away from danger - not an unplanned last minute action to avoid a collision.

The skill that separates a really good driver from an average driver is the ability to plan a safe escape route.

Plan Ahead

Planning an escape route means not allowing yourself to get in a situation where you are unable to avoid a crash. This involves continually monitoring the driving environment and planning ahead to identify potential escape routes.

Know The Options

In general there are three options to escape from a hazard:

- Go left.
- Go right.
- Stop in time.

The most appropriate option will always depend on the circumstances - such as the type of road, the weather conditions, the volume of traffic and the type of vehicle you are driving.



Look Well Ahead

You should always look ahead by at least 12-15 seconds so that you are aware of what is happening in the distance. This can help you to identify upcoming hazards and be able to STOP safely in plenty of time rather than steer towards an escape route at the side of the road. Stopping safely is always a better option than steering off the road or into another lane.

Scan The Road

Scanning is a skill that can help you to identify hazards and also identify potential escape routes. It involves taking in what is happening 360 degrees around your vehicle.

To scan effectively:

- Watch the road ahead, but move your eyes and / or your head when driving so that you also see



- what is happening to the sides of your vehicle.
- Check mirrors frequently to look what is happening behind and to the sides of your vehicle.
- Carry out 'over the shoulder' checks before making any manoeuvres to check your blind spots.

Keep Your Distance

The easiest way to ensure you always have an escape route is to maintain a safe following distance behind the vehicle in front. This means that if the vehicle stops due to an upcoming hazard you will have the time and space to come to a stop behind the vehicle safely. If absolutely necessary - and if it is safe to do so - you will also have the option of steering around the vehicle.

Think Tyres And Tarmac

When coming to a stop behind another vehicle make sure you can see its rear tyres AND the tarmac behind them. This leaves you room to steer your vehicle out of the way if you see another vehicle approaching from behind that doesn't appear to be stopping.

Look For Obstacles

The general driving environment will generally dictate your escape options. One option is to steer towards the outer edge of the road if you need to get out of the way of an upcoming hazard.

While driving you should be aware of obstacles that could prevent you from steering to the side of the road such as:

- Kerbs.
- Street lamps.
- Parked cars.
- Trees.
- Buildings.
- Fences.

NEVER steer to the side if you are unsure whether it is safe to do so. Sometimes hidden hazards can be highly dangerous - such as a steep drop behind vegetation or a ditch which is deeper than it appears.

Beware Of Pedestrians

A pavement should never be an option as an escape route due to the likelihood of hitting pedestrians. Even if a pavement appears to be clear it is extremely dangerous to take a chance as a pedestrian could appear from a doorway or could be hidden from view.

Never Steer Into Traffic

While steering to the left or right can sometimes be an option for an escape route you should NEVER steer into the lane of oncoming traffic. Even if the lane appears to be clear vehicles can appear quickly, especially on higher speed roads.

- E** Ensure you look well ahead for hazards.
- S** Steer to the side **ONLY** if you are sure it is safe.
- C** Check for escape options as you drive.
- A** Always keep your distance from the vehicle in front.
- P** Plan escape routes in advance.
- E** Environmental factors will dictate escape options.

WARNING

The faster you drive the less time you have to respond to a hazard and to select the most appropriate escape route. Always travel at a speed that enables you to stop within the distance you can see to be clear.